

Kaduna bombing error won't deter fight against terrorism —DEFENCE MINISTER

●UN deplores incident ●Death toll rises to 127, victims recount ordeals
●Some injured moved to Army 44 Reference Hospital ●PDP demands probe, compensation for victims ●CSO seeks overhaul of security architecture

By Kingsley Omonobi, Henry Umoru, John Alechenu, Luminous Jannamike & Ibrahim Hassan-Wuyo

ABUJA — Minister of State for Defence, Dr. Mohammed Bello, Matawallen Maradun, has said that the Army's bombing error at Tudun Biri in Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State, which led to the death of no fewer than 100 persons will not affect the war against banditry and terrorism.

The army had mistaken the villagers for terrorists.

Bello spoke during a condolence visit to the victims in Kaduna, while leading a high-level Federal Government delegation, which included the Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa; Chief of Army Staff, Lt-Gen Taoreed Lagbaja; Permanent Secre-

tary, Ministry of Defence, Dr. Ibrahim Kana, among others.

The minister spoke as death toll of the bombing error rose to 127 with the United Nations deploring the sad incident, while a civil society group, the Building Blocks for Peace Foundation, BBFOR-PEACE, sought a comprehensive revamp of the nation's security architecture.

Expressing Federal Governments' condolences to the victims of the mishap, Matawallen said that despite the unfortunate incident, the fight against insurgency and terrorism must continue.

"We are not going to relent in our fight against terrorism because these criminals must be defeated. We are going to continue fighting the criminals till we succeed against banditry and other criminalities in this country," he said.

He said that President Bola Tinubu had directed that he led a high level delegation to pay condolence visit to the people and government of Kaduna State over the sad event as well as families of the victims, both those that died and the ones receiving treatment in hospitals.

Accordingly, the Minister visited the Barau Dikko Teaching Hospital in Kaduna, where injured victims were receiving treatment and the Government House, Kaduna.

The former Zamfara governor assured the state government that the Federal Government will do everything possible to support families of the victims and set up a powerful panel of inquiry to ascertain the cause of the incident in order to prevent future occurrence.

Responding, Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna State, represented by his deputy, Hadiza Balarabe, also offered heartfelt sympathies to the affected families and pledged unwavering support to the families of victims.

She said while they await the findings from the panel of inquiry, the support of Federal Government in taking care of the victims was needed, saying that the state government alone cannot meet their needs.

The state government on its part has been able to maintain calm in the state in the face of the terrible

incidence.

"We have had engagement with clerics in the state to seek their support in talking with the affected communities for their understanding in order to douse the tension caused by this sad event," she said.

Death toll rises to 127, victims recount ordeals

Meanwhile, it was gathered, yesterday, that the death toll from the incident has hit 127.

Also, some survivors of the Kaduna village drone attack, who were at the Barau Dikko Teaching Hospital Kaduna, recounted their ordeals.

Hasiya Shuaibu, who lost all her male relatives, said: "I was not there when the incident happened but I had to rush to the village. In fact, all my relatives were there. The drone attack affected our children, our younger and elderly relatives. We have lost an entire generation. Government should come to our rescue."

"Government has not come to assist the village. With this happening, we pray they would assist the village and our remaining people. Although, for me and many others, it could be the end of our stay in

the village because we lost all our breadwinners."

Another victim, Malam Idris Yalo, said: "I'm traumatised. I couldn't eat since then. While we are in hospital, one of our relatives affected by the drone attack died. He was buried on Tuesday."

"We thank the state government. They were kind to our people in the hospital. We were sleeping on the bare floor but they have now provided us with beds and mattresses. The commissioner just left, she brought food for us."

"Prior to now, we had 66 injured persons in the hospital but the figure has gone up. Seven additional victims were brought here, yesterday. The seven persons were taken to the Army 1 Division medical facility."

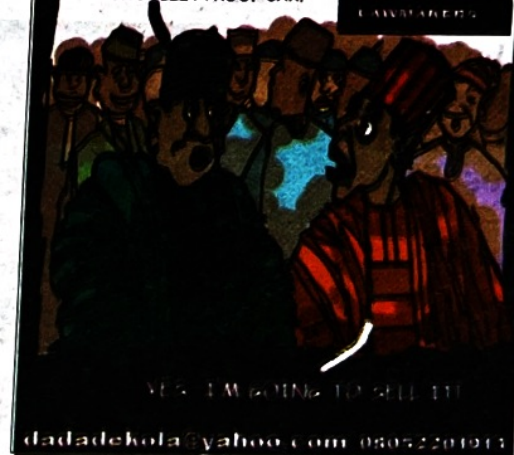
Body parts picked up on nearby trees

"Many other victims were not even found. Body parts were picked on nearby trees. My uncle is the Village Head, he told me 85 people died. But many were in pieces and cannot be counted."

"My mother's younger sister was in pieces."

"After the first drone attack

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From left, Engr Mansur Ahmed, former president, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN); Alh Abdullahi Aliyu, former permanent secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology; Yan Yuqing, Consul General of People's Republic of China in Lagos; Otunba Francis Meshioye, president, MAN; and Mrs Olumuyiwa Ajayi-Ade, representing the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, at the 2023 West Africa Largest Manufacturing Equipment and Raw Materials expo in Lagos. Photo by Akeem Salau.